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Issue #57
April/May 2005

HEAVEN'S METAL®

We're now rolling with a crew.
Working on the deadline of Heaven's Metal right on the heals of HM Magazine has become quite a task. My friends in the metal community have rallied around, though, so now we have a committee of metalheads and writers to deliver Heaven's Metal. Please welcome: Daniel Jesse; Ed Hellig; Matt Morrow; Michael Larson; Jasen Morden; and Chris Beck. They've all got great metallic resumes (that glow in the dark), and you may recognize their names from various message boards pertaining to the world's loudest music. This should allow for some good metal journalism.

Don't forget to visit HMmag.com/heavensmetal]

Grace and Peace,

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METAL TRACKS

Hard-news-for-metal-heads

Pale Horse

Pale Horse started out as Thanatopsis. "They lost their singer and Jerry wanted to get me to sing for them while I was in a band called Voice of Command," relates Rich Olson. "Harry was not sure if I would fit, because at the time my vocals were very Necrophagia (Killjoy) style. But I went and tried out for the band and made it. I left my band and when I became the official singer they changed their name to Hostility. Under Hostility we released *Soon Comes The Return* in 1992. This got great reviews. But we did get blasted from the press because we were labeled a Christian band and we used the F-word in one of our songs. So, we took a major hit for that. But, at the time we were not even sure that we were a Christian band. I mean, I wrote about the Christian way, but my lyrics were not directly Christian.

"After that we had broken up for a bit and Jerry wanted to start another project that was more doom related. So, he started a band called Median soon to change to Pale Horse, because there was a band with that name already. Well, after a little bit of time and no singer he asked me if I would want to help him out with recording their album. So, I agreed. But, it wound up that everyone who was in Hostility became permanent members. We recorded *Mournful* in 1993 under the name Pale Horse. It has stuck since then. *Mournful* got so many good reviews (and a few bad) it was amazing. But that album served to be the death of our band. Our label A.R.T. Records really did us dirty, and the band disbanded because of it. It was a shame because we hear from so many people that we could have been the "next big thing" in the Christian metal scene. That remains to be seen (laughing)."

11 years later and the band is back. "It is weird," explains Olson. "We had started putting a few CDRs of our releases on ebay and next thing you know Retroactive Records contacted us and want to release our stuff. So, we had a deal with them and then we sort of got traded to Bombworks Records. Rob and David of Bombworks have been nothing but honest and truthful with us and they released our *Until the Last Seal is Opened* this year. Rob is a true metal warrior! We plan on releasing a new CD in 2006, so keep an eye out for it. It may be called *One Nation Under*."

For more information on this intense original hybrid of death / thrash / doom / old school death metal, go to bombworksrecords.com or the band's own palehorseusa.com

News bullets

The new **Disciple** album, *Rise Up* (releasing on June 7) closes with the song "Tribute," which was written to honor American troops serving our country. Vocalist **Kevin Young** explains, "We really wanted to honor the American soldiers who have fought recently and to those who have given their lives for our country, from the bottom of our hearts we say thank you."

Once Dead, who are basically **Vengeance Rising**, minus **Roger Martinez**, plus **Scott Waters** (Ultimatum), have now released a live DVD: *Once Dead – Return with a Vengeance!* The band currently has plans to go in to the studio this June and will release a full-length CD through Roxx Records in the late Summer/early Fall. You can catch the band live one more time at this year's Cornerstone festival.

Frost Like Ashes has completed tracking thier first full-length album, *Tophet*, for PsychoAcoustix Records and began mixdown 3/28/05.

Virgin Black are "deeply entrenched" in the process of finalising the material for their next release. "Recording will begin very soon and we hold hopes of a release date not beyond mid-2005."

Stryper has been tapped to play the Lorca Rock Festival in Murcia, Spain (June 18), along with Iron Maiden, Lacuna Coil, and Dream Theater. Stryper has signed an album deal with Big 3 Records, and should have a Summer release. The band has added **Tracy Ferrie** (Seraiah, Whitecross) as bassist (upon **Tim Gaines**' departure). Tim Gaines released the quote after leaving: "On August 13, 21 years to the day I joined Stryper, I have given my resignation. Without going into detail, if I were to stay in Stryper, I would not grow into the person that the Lord wants me to be. I wish the guys in Stryper the best. The new bass player will keep you well entertained, and he is spiritually in tune with the Lord."

Rob Rock's new album, *Holy Hell*, (AFM Records) features the guitar playing of **Carljohan Grimmark** (Narnia), as well as licks by producer **Roy Z**. Rock is currently on the *Aces High Tour* in Europe, along with Masterplan and Circle 2 Circle. He will also be on the bill at the Sweden Rock festival in June, alongside Megadeth, Accept, Motley Crue, Dio, and Anthrax.

Pantokrator is playing the Gates of Metal festival.

San Bernadino, CA will host the *Beyond the Mountain* festival on August 27 & 28, featuring **Sacred Warrior** (whose song inspired the fest name), **Barren Cross**, **Neon Cross**, **Saint**, **Holy Soldier**, **Guardian**, **Ultimatum**, **39 Lashes**, and **Recon**. Plans are in the works for a live DVD to be made of the event.

The *I Am God* album by **Rivera/Bomma** has been pushed back to late Summer.

Ulf Christiansson

Jerusalem frontman Ulf Christiansson is an elder statesman of Christian rock. He's put in the face-time (if you know what I mean), so it would behoove us to listen when he talks.

Why a solo record?
Really, because I did several solo albums before and it has turned out to be a very good thing. I am more flexible musically on a solo record and I can do what I feel, using different kinds of musicians. I feel that, as long as it is Jerusalem, we have to stick to and be faithful to what Jerusalem are about and maybe more so when it gets to the music. I think it could be time to make another Jerusalem record soon.

What rips your heart out these days?
Many things are on my mind today, and I feel I'm on the threshold of the second phase of my pioneering life, and ever since I got back to Sweden after living with my family in Florida (that I miss a lot), for 3 years I have had many reasons for having my heart ripped out. First of all I did *Entertainers & Soldiers* with the purpose of saying this:

"It doesn't matter if you win the whole world, if you still lose the purpose of life; and after bowing your knees for that system, you still lose it anyway."

Jesus was confronted by Satan to bow before him and to have the glory of this world given to Him, but He refused and He is our example. That's also why many are so empty after keeping and taking the glory to themselves. That's also why the title *E & S* (and the song "Glorify"). Entertainers are easy to find: waiting and striving for attention. Real soldiers are very hard to find. Many want to stand on a stage getting the glory out of that, but few are ready to pay the price of being a seeker and spend years in the desert without ANY glory – just for the sake of His Kingdom instead of MY kingdom. And the music business is, without doubt, a MY kingdom business. That system can change anyone who has a pure heart into a slave just in months, and I've seen it. It's a leaven that grows on you. That rips my heart out for sure!

I've started every year these last 5 years with a very long fast; just to see and hear straight from God, getting away from trends, charts and all the not so important stuff we are so entangled with. And I can tell that it is fantastic to experience His voice in such a crystal clear way as you do after a time like that. God does, without a doubt, speak. It is absolutely possible to live in this system (and) not be of it; but it is David's desert time – with all the loneliness and pain and God's cutting branches in your life – if you really want to be able to take down Goliath. But it is worth it. But someone has to do this, and that's the next level of pioneering I'm talking about. Those radicals are at the door, I can see them. I have met too many artists and musicians who've been burned by religion and stupidity; but the mistake that many are doing is that they rebel also against God. Instead of becoming more depending on Him, they stay in their negative past and disappointments and lose the opportunity to use this persecution and pain for a breakthrough in their own lives. There's far too many today living with unforgiveness and bitterness, and even if they say they do not have this thing bugging them, you can hear it through the words they speak. God's waiting for the real people, not the dreamers that are living in a dream world full of easy ways, ideas and shortcuts to success; that's NOT His ways in anyone's life, and has never been, ever! That I DO definitely know. This is so important that it cannot be said enough.

What keeps you making music?
One is because it is the way God made me and where I communicate the best, that's what I can do and it makes me feel right doing it. The other is because I do have a message of freedom for everyone, and it is a passionate, burning fire inside of me that never has really left, even in times when I thought it had, it was still there and I'm grateful for that. So, I'll probably do it until the day I die.

What areas have you failed in with your life? How has that impacted you?
Failed is a word that makes me want to think… Failure is the way things sometimes LOOK LIKE; but it is not necessarily the fact, because in those times we do grow and find ourselves, changing in a new way. Failure would in that moment be if I refused to repent or change in the direction God wants me to go. I think that in the middle of the 80's we had a period of listening too much to what record business people wanted us to be, instead of holding to the things we really were, and the simpleness we had from the beginning; and that was leading us to lose some of the fire we had as a band. I also felt I came in a real battle with what really was motivating me and I started to be depressed…therefore we made a decision to take a brake and go to bible school. It was great in the beginning, but in the end I found myself sitting in church really doing nothing, mainly because it was not what God had told us to do anyway. But I must say that in the beginning we really did the right thing by just taking that time off from touring and travelling and this was the thing we needed to do for our families. I think that's far more important then running my ministry just for the sake of it, if you know what I mean? Anyway, in the end of that period we did the album *Dancing on the Head of the Serpent*. That song also went straight up as number one on the CCM shart in the US, but it also created a lot of fuzz in Scandinavia mainly because of the album cover (pictures a boot crushing a demon's head), having some stores even refuse to sell it. I'm not unwilling to speak about failures, but I can say that a failure would be if I would still go on in my own selfish ambitions and limitations seeking – success that way. But I have changed through the years, letting God cleanse me from that poison. I think we should be suspicious against people who do not limp, who have no scars and never have wrestled with God. That would be a great failure: to trust *those* guys.

On another note, we will have our 30th anniversary this year, so we must find a way to celebrate that, we're looking for a way to do something fun.

For a look at this entire (long) interview, you can find the link at hmmag.com/heavensmetal. For more info on Ulf and Jerusalem, visit their site at Jerusalem.se

Century Sleeper

Century Sleeper is the new project between Ian Arkley (Ashen Mortality, Seventh Angel) and James Allin (Visionary). We chatted with Ian and James for the following interview, prior to their first ever face-to-face meeting.

What led to this joint venture? What common interests initiated your relationship?
"A common appreciation for each others work," explains James. "We had contacted each other previously and had toyed with the idea of a collaboration. We both have similar musical tastes and ideas about a lot of things. We have never actually met though, and may really hate each other on first sight. Seriously though, we have had many great long phone conversations, and email each other alot.

What differences, if any, have you discovered after working closer together for the first time?
"If working thousands of miles apart on computers can be classified as working together..." laughs Ian. "I haven't noticed many differences, except that James' demos are almost album quality; and mine are thrown together abominations, which only James and my close friends/girlfriend can see the potential with."

"I've discovered that Ian is much quicker at writing songs than I am," chides James. "He could put out a great album every few months if you let him. Ian's hands are starting to fuse to his guitar by now, and he has some guitar riffs on this album that make me wonder, 'How'd he do that?' Other than this we have got along just great and everything has been smooth running."

What are the goals for this band?
"Hopefully to be an ongoing project and to produce music into our twilight years, at least," speaks Ian. "To produce truly emotive and powerful music and to inspire fear in the hearts of our rivals."

"We want our music to be a journey for the listener and not just a cheap thrill ride with little substance," adds James. "This is not party music! Go into your closet or lay on the roof of your house and listen to Century Sleeper there! (For safety reasons maybe avoid the roof).

Please share all the pertinent details of this new album.
"The album is due to be recorded in Seattle in early March," shares Ian, "and should be ready for the consumer this Fall sometime. We do not have an album title as yet. The songs were born from some very difficult times and emotions. Among other things they are about; loss, separation, pain – the usual stuff – along with a song inspired by the book *The Lord of the Flies*, a song about a local cemetary and some great songs James has written. The sound is very much gothic doom metal, with plenty of keyboards and mainly clean vocals. Think along the lines of My Dying Bride mixed with Type O Negative and Celtic Frost and you won't be far off."

What do you like/dislike about today's music scene, and emo in particular?
"All practitioners of emo must answer for their crimes against metal on the great day of reckoning," laughs Ian. "I do not particularly like this style of music generally, but like to keep an open mind and will give any band a listen. It is really good to see an upsurgence in true metal (often referred to as Battle metal these days... For pure non cerebral enjoyment check out *The Book of Heavy Metal* by Dream Evil, which contains lines like: 'Wear nothing except black skin-tight leather,' and starts with the singer screaming, 'metaaaal'); and also really good modern bands like Killswitch Engage and Mastodon. The rejoining of Priest by Rob has to be worth celebrating!"

[For more info, visit coldfusion-music.com]

News bullets

Axehead, Inc is a new band that includes a couple current members of **Crimson Thorn Luke Renno** (playing guitar) and **Miles Sunde**.

Guardian is re-releasing some older, out-of-print albums, a DVD of all their videos, and a new album and a tour. Current plans have John & Dino Elefante once again producing.

Bride has also put together a DVD of their conceptual videos – *Welcome to the Show*.

Retroactive plans on re-releasing both of the classic hardcore albums by **Six Feet Deep** (*Struggle* and *Road Less Traveled*), the *Circle of Dust* and *Brainchild* albums by **C.O.D.**, and *Unveiled* by **Whitecross**.

The folks at Flaming Fish put out a fantastic magazine/CD combination called *Automata* that is a great way to keep up with the good Christian heavy industrial / electronica music out there.

Monsterus is scheduled to play at the Sanctuary Tent at Cornerstone and the HM Magazine Stage at the Sonshine Festival.

PsychoAcoustix have re-issued the **Fearful Symmetry** album, *A Loss of Balance*. One of the bonus tracks is a trippy electronica version of the *River Disturbance* hit "Belltown."

Nineteen88 just inked a deal with the Indie division of Capitol Records (AEC), which will put their debut album, *The Great American Rock And Roll Spectacle*, in stores this Spring.

Jacob's Dream have recorded and turned in a new album (*Drama of the Ages*) to their label (Metal Blade).

The new **Jet Circus** album, *Look At Death Now*, is (finally) being released in a cooperative deal with the band's Hypersonic label and Rivel Records.

Aletheian's guitarist, Alex is recovering well from his injury. "We have played two shows with him since the injury, the second of which went really well. He has not yet regained full functionality of his hand, but he has now recovered enough dexterity to resume the recording of the new album, *Dying Vine*. They plan on a June 1st Release in conjunction with the release of a DVD.

Ultimatum are currently recording songs for their fourth album. Along with the new CD, the band is working on a live DVD that was shot in Anaheim, CA this past August.

Jeff Lewis (Mortification) has joined **Sympathy**. They are beginning to plan work on a new album.

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WHITECROSS

INTERVIEW BY MIKE LARSON

When I heard the news that Whitecross was getting back together, I got excited! You know some bands got "it", whatever "it" is and in my opinion Whitecross is one of those bands. Genius guitar playing, amazing vocals, great songs and a heart for God all intertwined together. I was able to talk with both Scott Wenzel and Rex Carroll on different occasions about what is happening with the band. I will share some of what both had to say about the past, present, and future for Whitecross.

Rex Carroll

HM – What brought Whitecross back together again? How has God made it possible for you and Scott to make music together again?

RC – Well, there was a chain of events that happened back in 2002. As some of you may recall, we did a reunion at that time… We got together and we did some live dates and at that time we were talking about, "Well, let's do some live dates and then if things work out, then maybe we'll talk about a studio recording." I think at the time we were even considering even doing a live album… So we had done these shows and then Scotty and I had a falling out down in NC… There was a misunderstanding; words were spoken in haste… We'll leave it at that. And things ended badly. So, I was full of disappointment and regret over that. There was a wall that went up at that time and I thought, 'Ok… well, that's it.' We certainly have tried unsuccessfully to do this and more time went by. There

was an issue with the concert promoter at the last date we had done about being shorted on the date. And that was something that was all too frequent back when we were doing it full time. We used to get shorted on a regular basis. That also kind of helped hasten the demise of the band in the first place. You kind of get discouraged when people don't hold up their end. So what happened was, last August, the concert promoter that had shorted us, he sent the balance of what he had owed us. Scotty and I had both… Well, that money was long gone, we'll never see it, (it) kind of had moved on already...

HM – Well that's awesome that he sent it.

RC- I tell you what, it was just such a blessing. I got the check from the promoter, and I was just like, 'Wow!' Something clicked inside me. I was happy for the promoter. 'Man, this is so awesome, because now he doesn't have to carry that around with him.'

put that back together. Scotty had said to me back last August, "I don't know if any of our fans are..." and I was like, "Oh, they're out there. They're just not organized." In other words: how do you get the music out to where people are aware that it's out there? He said, "Well, there's no record label that wants to put it out." I said, "Actually, there is ways to work around that." And I was thinking all along, 'Yeah, between what Greg and I are doing with Girder Media, which is like I am totally excited about how that's going, I think there is an opportunity.' So, we had been working on that anyways, so lo and behold, then the reconnection with Doug Van Pelt came along, and Doug says "Hey, I am starting the Heaven's Metal magazine again," so everybody's jazzed. So here we are.

HM – I realize that the short-term goal is to try to come back together and start making music together again. The first goal is to re-record the first Whitecross album again. Are there any long term goals?

other than it being out-of-print or rare, but a lot of people have said that the first album is their favorite or *In the Kingdom* is their favorite. So, we figured we can do this first album, and that kind of helps us to figure out what kind of response we'll get to it. The response has already been very overwhelmingly positive. We have just a lot of people signing up for the email network and logging onto the website at whitecrossmusic.com, just a lot of support from the public.

Scott Wenzel

HM – What brought Whitecross back together again? How has God made it possible for you and Rex to make music together again?

SW –He (Rex) wanted to know if we could get back in the studio and do some work, and I asked him what he had in mind. He said re-recording the first record, because we never really had a big budget on that first record.

"...I think that Scotty and I have always behaved together like a dysfunctional family . . . when he and I get together, then it's like we're throwing televisions at each other..."

HM – Right.

RC - For the rest of his life. Sure, the money is always handy, but I wasn't even looking at the money issue. I was just feeling, like, really good for the promoter. So then I called Scotty, and I said, "Hey Scotty! Guess what? I got your money for you." And sent that off to him. Scotty used that occasion -- there needed to be some apologies spoken about how things had gone, and then there was some forgiveness that came out of that. I found myself in the position of, you know… 'I really don't feel like it, but you should forgive your brother 70 X 7,' so I did… As soon as I entered into that kind of an attitude then there was like another wall that came down. And there was like a spiritual connection that I felt back to Scotty and… I mean, you don't run your life on feelings, you run your life on what the Word says, but it was an entirely biblical kind of thing that we went through… The main thing between me and Scotty is and has always been communication. 'Cause we're such different people that we just really don't think alike at all. We have the Lord in common. I mean, we both like music and both want to see the ministry happen, but then after that we both seem to go on divergent paths I guess. So, God was able to

RC – As far as the band Whitecross, at times it's been something I have had to be dragged into kicking and screaming when I didn't want to do it, and at times, it's something that Scotty had to be dragged into kicking and screaming when he didn't want to do it. I don't mind people knowing that, this is my words, Scotty may disagree, I don't know… but I will just put it out there as a matter of truth as the way that I see it. I think that Scotty and I have always behaved together like a dysfunctional family. It's like… Scotty is like the nicest, warmest, most genuine, down-to-earth guy anybody will ever meet. Except when he and I get together, then it's like we're throwing televisions at each other. And that's just the way it's always been. I don't think that either one of us are like that with anyone else, that's just how we get… Rather than saying yeah, we're coming back together and saying it's going to be big and we're going on tour and this and that… I don't think any of us is trying to say that whatsoever. What I think we are saying is that this is a great time to re-record and re-release the first album. That can happen a lot faster than a new studio album can happen. One of the reasons is there is a lot of demand for the first album. I don't know what makes an album collectable

We were just starting out and nobody knew who we were. Some of those songs ended up being the fans' ... some of the favorites that they would have throughout the years were off that first record, but the production of it was really weak, and we want right now to go back in and re-record that with a bigger budget.

HM – If re-recording the first album works out, are you planning on putting out a Whitecross album with new material?

SW – Yes, I am really excited about that, because along with our conversation Rex said he was going to mail me a CD. He did and I listened to it, and it was just tunes that he had written without any melodies, vocals or lyrics. So I listened to it and I really got excited. My son was home from college for the weekend. He listened to it and said, "It is some of the best stuff that I have heard in a long time." For him to say that, being a junior away from college, really excited me, because it's one thing if the old man likes it, but if my son likes it that's really important.

[To read the entirety of this conversation, look for a link at hmmag.com/heavensmetal]

10

BRAZILIAN METAL

IT DOESN'T BEGIN AND END WITH SEPULTURA

BY ED HELLIG

[Pictured Seven Angels (top); and Divine Symphony.]

The tropical lands of Brazil, with its luscious forests and sandy beaches, are not the usual place you would look for Christian metal. In fact, the renowned contemporary philosopher Paulo Jr. (bassist for Sepultura) has said, "When the majority of people think of Brazil, four things come to mind: café, Pelé, Rio, and Carnaval." Granted, Paulo Jr. is not a renowned philosopher after all, but his words certainly ring true.

Although Brazil has produced such influential metal luminaries as Sepultura, Krisiun, and Sarcófago, it wasn't until the nineties that the Christian metal scene really came into fruition. From complete non-existence, it went on to become one of the most prolific scenes in the world, a fertile breeding ground where new bands are formed almost weekly. You can find representatives from every possible genre: from black metal (**Death Poems**, **Divine Symphony**, **Poems of Shadows**), death metal (**Sarcross**, **Spiritual War**, **Spirit's Breeze**), to everything in-between (**Destra** with their progressive metal, **Serenade in Darkness**' gothic metal prowess, **Vulgata** and **Eterna** with their power metal assault, **Shaphal**'s industrial metal.)

Such growth is due, in part, by the commitment of the bands to the cause of Christianity, and a willingness to surrender all to the will of God and the dissemination of His good news. Pastor Batista, vocalist for **Antidemon** and founder of Zadoque Community – the largest underground church in Brazil, which caters to different musical 'tribes' in the bowels of the megalopolis of São Paulo – also believes that Christian metal (and Zadoque itself) filled a niche with certain people who didn't necessarily fit within the vision of the contemporary church. "Since we formed Antidemon back in 1994, we have seen a lot of people accepting Christ at our concerts. However, many of these new believers found strong obstacles and discrimination in our churches, and unfortunately many were lost. We didn't fit in conventional churches anymore", he says. Zadoque Community was spawned from the second incarnation of Christian Metal Forces, a pioneering ministry that began in 1989 and whose primary objective was reaching out to the underground in a way the contemporary church simply didn't know how. An absolute new concept at the time, the old CMF essence remains at the very core of what Zadoque stands for. "Today, Zadoque has twelve congregations throughout the country and we have even started a small mission in Arequipa, Peru. We're certain we're not the only ones or the best ones at it. We're simply a part of this revolution God is starting." Antidemon is about to embark on their third tour of Europe, which will cover countries like France, Germany, Poland, and the Czech Republic. "God has opened so many doors for us in these eleven years that we never thought possible, not because we're great musicians, but because He goes before us wherever we go," Batista exclaims.

There are those, however, who dismiss the work of some of the bands in the scene as amateurish and sub-par. While zeal and naiveté can indisputably be part of the argument, the overwhelming truth is that most bands do not have the financial means to release an album that compares to their developed world counterparts. So it boils down to cash, or the lack thereof. Without those resources, and the lack of studios with adequate recording equipment, some bands are caught between the desire to record their work to the best of their abilities, and the quagmire of economic hardship. All the while, trying to fulfill God's commandment to spread the Gospel. There is an exigent purpose, an assurance of a higher calling that keep them marching on. Kelton, guitarist for Divine Symphony, considers it a matter of support. "Most bands do not have the necessary funds to release good quality work. But most of us have the talent, and I'm proud of the Brazilian scene in that aspect." Their album *Reject Darkness* is a black metal juggernaut released by Extreme Records and is currently being distributed in the US by BlastBeats, to overall positive acclaim.

And talent is what led **Seven Angels** to be chosen to open for Nightwish and Helloween in their latest excursion through the country. "The experience of opening for those bands was an enormous

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What Uli Jon Roth Says

First off, there are only three guitarists who should ever tour in some superstar G3 type tour; and they are today's finest living players: Frank Marino, Michael Schenker, and Uli Jon Roth. Maybe that's a subjective statement, but when I hear their playing, all objectivity simply flies out the window with their melodic notes. These guys bend and make their strings sing. Uli Jon Roth was the very first "So & So Says" style interview I ever did (just prior to Heaven's Metal Issue #1). This long-awaited follow-up holds the distinction of being the longest I've ever done – a cool one hour and 45 minutes long. Here are the most interesting bits:

Doug: Hey, Doug Van Pelt here.
Uli: What's your name?

Doug.. Van... Pelt.
Oh, okay. Is that Dutch?

Yeah, I've only been to Holland once, but I have some ancestors a few generations ago who are from there.
And what did you think of Holland?

Oh, I thought it was a very beautiful country.
Quite different, isn't it?

Yeah.
No other place quite like it.

Met some really neat people there, and uh, very European I thought.
What can I do for you?

Well, I'd like to do an interview for my magazine.
What kind of a magazine is it?

It is a music magazine that primarily focuses on the Christian hard music genre, and in every issue we always deviate from that genre and do an interview with somebody, like interview Extreme, or Metallica or Megadeth or Green Day and have an interesting interview on philosophies and what have you... in music.
Okay.

So anyway, I have the tape recorder rollin' if you'd like to proceed. The first question is: What is it like being the world's greatest guitar player?
Laughs. What a question. It's a question of taste, you know. Well, I don't know what to answer to that question!

I understand. That's kind of a weird question. Is your sky guitar available as a production line?
No, it's not. There was a Japanese company, who actually copied it without my permission, several years back. And they sold them, and when I found out, I stopped them, because I thought it was not a good idea. And, apart from that, the copies weren't actually that good, you know. And uh, it's not an easy guitar to build. My guitar maker spends alot of time building them, and they have to be right, because it's quite an efficient instrument. Not like a normal guitar. And they're complex... so, if they're not quite right, then you won't get them to do what they should be doing. So, I don't think it's the kind of instrument you should put into production. It was, first of all, to be prohibitively expensive to actually manufacture it and then buy it... but also at the same time, uh, I feel it's really such a personal thing to me and, uh, to really get my own playing, and I just want to keep it that way.

What would be the makeup of your frets?
The makeup?

Yeah, do you scallop them or are they....?
They are scalloped to varying degrees, depending on which guitar, and each guitar is slightly different that I have. Some will have a deeper scallop, some will have a more shallow one. And the scallop tends to get deeper the higher you will go up towards the neck, and the reason for that being that ... I find the chords... and the chords particularly in the first position... it's easier to keep them in tune when you're playing in a more polyphonic way. [If] you're just playing simple chords, of course, it's no problem, but if you start with your thumb and, uh, moving the strings, then sometimes it gets a little tricky to keep them in tune if the scallop is too deep... if you play that kind of style, you know?

To what do you attribute your technical prowess to?
Uh, it is, on one hand of course, you have to have a certain talent, and the more talent you have, the less you will have to practice. But some people have less talent and they may practice more than others to get better, whatever. I have to have an innate talent for discovering technique also, and I discover... I don't know. I think I've discovered my own teaching technique, which I apply towards myself. So, I'm my own pupil and I've managed to somehow stretch the boundaries of the instrument further and further... and the longer I play, the easier it gets for me to do this. So... I must be doing something right. But it's certainly not just one answer that I could give to this. It's a whole

string of things... you know, complex issues, like playing an instrument or mastering an instrument demand complex answers. It's not just one thing.. It's a whole range of things that makes one player good or better than another or more technically proficient or more musically proficient or whatever. And, uh, you have to pinpoint it down a little bit more than that. I can't just put my finger on it and say that's the one thing.

Right.
I don't think there is just one thing. There would be a string of things and... maybe I could even sit down and analyze it for you, but uh, I would have to actually think about it and I don't think I've ever really analyzed my own method as such... my own learning method. All I know is, that it's extremely effective and I can literally learn just about any instrument in no time at all, um, by just applying myself almost... you know, like a child would.

Uh huh.
If I may call it so... One of the secrets is that I'm always tuned into the instrument, where it's from. You know, you have to tune into the guitar. I never really tried to force myself onto the instrument, I let the instrument speak to me and then I would communicate with the music in the end. It's like a horse and the rider, you know. I give the direction and I'm the master of the instrument, but the instrument's also giving me something and every instrument will give me something else. So, um, because I'm sensitive to that, that's why the instrument does not offer me a lot of resistance. And that's why I say it's similar to a horse. You know? If you were, like, a good rider, you will know when the horse will jump, or whatever, and you will give it a certain amount of leeway at the right point in time and the horse will trust you, because the horse knows you're doing the right thing.

Right
The guitar is similar. Every instrument is similar. Although they all have their own minds and, uh, if you know what I mean. They all have their own something that they can give you or not give you and every instrument can give you a lot of resistance. And I'm not saying it's a conscious thing, but I do actually believe that there's a certain amount of life ... even in an instrument, you know? Uh, and, but they can give you resistance and the main thing is to overcome the resistance in yourself, you know? To be free of any obstacles, free of any blockages, have a very clear mind – your mind should be as clear as, you know, a calm lake or a mirror or whatever. It should just reflect the music. There shouldn't be anything else in it while you are communicating with the music, or while you are communicating with the instrument. I think, that's maybe one of the reasons why a lot of people find it difficult to actually overcome certain boundaries on the instrument and most players never go beyond a certain point, because they simply cannot overcome their own mental resistance. Am I talking too esoteric here?

No, no. It's esoteric, but, uh, understandable.
Well, I try to explain it the way that I see it, you know, and maybe it will go above some guy's heads, but some people may know what I am talking about.

Yeah, I don't think it's too high. Uh, where do your ideas come from?
Um, they come from many directions, I guess. There's not just one source – there are many, many different sources. And in fact, there's probably as many sources as there are ideas. Although, that's probably too much, because sometimes you have several ideas from the same source. But, you know, ideas could come from something that you observe or something that you hear somebody else doing. But, um, that tends to be the initial thing when you are still in your learning phase. Once you're beyond that, once you've found your own world in the music, then the ideas tend to come from either within you, because you hear the ideas inside of you and they arise inside of you, or they're kind of almost, like, in the air and you have to grasp onto them. So, it's something you can't really put into words.

I guess it'd be easier to ask you questions about specific song ideas like, uh, where did you get the idea for some of the dive bomb sounds, the vibrato sounds in "Fly to the Rainbow?"
Uh, well, the vibrato sounds... you mean the screams, like the horse or what?

Yeah.
Yeah, well, I was trying to make a sound like some horse in the wilderness, I guess, with the guitar. Something crying out, and that's the kind of sound it was like. But, dive bombs... Well, I mean, you know who created that (laughs)! And, uh, literally every guitar player who did it after him, just took that from Jimi Hendrix; and that included a whole bunch of guys that included Ritchie Blackmore. He was the first one to make that his trademark. But he took it from Hendrix and I took it from, I guess, both of them. You know? I did it then in my own way. I kind of carried it into my own sphere. And it sounds different than as if these guys did it. But it's the same root. I didn't invent that.

Who do you look up to now, as far as guitar players?
Um, looking up... If I'm quite honest, and I'm sure you want me to be honest, I'm not really looking up to anybody. Um, I can look around, and there's a lot of talent out there. There's a lot of older players who are excellent; there's a lot of younger players who are excellent. You know, certainly still looking up to what to Jimi Hendrix did, for obvious reasons. Simply because the guy was an unparalleled genius and some of his stuff is just going completely in a league of his own. So, certainly looking up to that.

Mm-hmm. How do you feel about other guitar players emulating you?
Um, it's kind of, you know, flattering; and I realize that guitar players before me, who came before me, I've learned from them. I guess it's only natural that other people learn from you. If they don't, then, you know, you're just not very influential, I guess. But I think it's a good sign. And it's certainly something I would encourage, because that's a way to learn. Everybody learns by emulating those who were better at what they do. That's how we learn in Germany. You know, we emulate our parents. It's the same in music. You know, you need heroes, you need idols, or whatever. Idols (is) maybe the wrong word. But, yes, you should have heroes. You know, I have a lot of heroes in my musical upbringing. And most of them were actually Classical. Most of them were composers. In fact, they still are. (I'm) still idolizing the music of Mozart and Chopin. I think that will never change.

"The guitar is similar (to a horse)... They all have their own minds... They all have their own something that they can give you or not give you and every instrument can give you a lot of resistance. I actually believe that there's a certain amount of life . . . even in an instrument..."

Who do you look up to for Spiritual Guidance?
I look up to the sky. Whatever I can see in the sky. See, there's many forces out there that I wouldn't look up to. Of course, I would look up to God, I would look up to Jesus Christ. I would also look up to messengers such as Buddha, you know? I found a lot of inspiration in the teachings of Buddha. Although I believe that Jesus is the Son of God, uh, that is certainly my belief and I am convinced of this. But Buddha was a great teacher, he was more than a teacher. I think he was definitely inspired by, you know, very high forces, and there's a lot I can learn there. And there are other forces, you know? I very much ... I guess, my own opinion or my own view about these things ... in one way I would call myself a free-thinker, but certainly I'm leaning most towards the Christian angle, you know? Although I wouldn't go so far as calling myself a Christian, because I've found that most people who do, I think they're actually not Christians. (Laughs) So, the word is used very, very lightly. Nobody that I know, keeps, sticks to the Gospel. Nobody is really following the teachings of Jesus. A lot of people are trying, and some are succeeding much better than others. So, I'm just trying to do good in that respect myself, but I still have a long way to go and I've got a lot to learn. So, that's my take on the subject.

How much Buddhist philosophy do you believe?
Uh, quite a bit. But there's also some of it that I would not subscribe to. For instance, I do believe in reincarnation, one hundred percent, but I don't believe that we actually get reborn as animals. You know, so there you have some discrepancies between me and what they believe. Um, reincarnation, even in the early Christian church, was a clear precept . . . Jesus believed in reincarnation, all these people believed in reincarnation at that time. But, I think around the time the apostles (were) in the grave, 300 (AD) and something, there was a counsel. The bishops and pope, they voted against the dogma, against including the dogma of reincarnation in the Christian church, and it's been held ever since like that. I think actually it's a big mistake, because the doctrine of reincarnation, to me is much more plausible; otherwise I would have the greatest difficulty in understanding. For instance, just to give you a couple of examples where Jesus is talking about reincarnation, is when he talks about Elias. In English, would you say, Elijah or Elihah?

Elijah?
Elias. E-l-i-a-s the prophet, maybe you would say Elijah. I'm just going by the Hebrew way. And, because it had been prophesied that he would return to announce the coming of the Messiah...

And he said that John the Baptist...
Yeah, exactly. And His disciples and people came, and they said, "Well, what about Elijah?" And He said, "He has come already." But they didn't recognize him and they did with him whatever they wanted and he meant John the Baptist. But that was not the only time. He made a couple of other references also, which, in my mind, clearly can only mean one thing. But, whatever, it's not too important. But, to me, this is definitely something I believe in.

You've touched on this already, but I have a question here, what do you think of Jesus Christ?
Well, again, an extremely complex question. Well, first of all, I think He was the Son of God, He was the Symbol of God, He was the Savior, He was the Teacher of mankind. He came for the specific purpose to redeem mankind from whatever went wrong before, and I think He did. He left a little bit in every one of us. I think, uh, after He was here the world was never the same again. No matter what happens in His Name afterwards, the church and all the religious wars, this is all man-made stuff, this is the way men work. Everything that's good ... you know, it gets corrupted by evil and good knowledge gets distorted. But this is not the prophecy of Jesus... (He) gave us the right kind of teachings and, if we don't ... if we fail to understand them, and fail to interpret them in the right way, that's our problem, you know? These are, I guess, some of the most important things about Him. Does this answer your question?

Yes. What do you think of His claims to be, "the Way, the Truth, and the Life, no one comes to the Father, but by Me?"
Uh, being the symbol of God, which I believe He was, and, in fact, the Son of God, the representative of God, this is true. But, I think what He means by this is: He means His way. You know, He represents a certain way, He represents the way of truth, He represents the way of sinlessness, He represents the way of complete compassion, of forgiveness, of sacrificing yourself for the greater good of mankind. That's what He represents, and that, I believe, is the way to get closer to God. So, that's what He means, that's what I believe. But there are many different ways to get there. Certainly, there are as many ways to get there as there are people. But, the general precept and the general principle – they are always the same. That's what I believe. And that's what He stands for.

"I was referring to ... the divine part that's in every human soul, which I call the conscience ... our purest part. If anything in us is divine, it's our conscience."

How do you, uh, I guess, mingle Buddhist philosophy with Christian Philosophy?
It's easy. Because, um, the things, the ideas and Buddhist thinking that appear to me are the very ones that I've just mentioned. A path to enlightenment, or to evolvement, or towards God, is achieved through compassion, suffering, empathy, understanding – all these things. Don't deny them. And this is, in the end, what Jesus preached [to] the flock. It's just a slightly different ... you're shining a different light onto the same subject. You understand?

Mm-hmm.
That's the way it is for me.

One thing you mentioned, about how mankind always takes the teachings of Christ and the good gets corrupted... What is the reason for that corruption?
It's the force of Entropy. It's the force of the universe and man, being a part of that universe, governed by the same God, we are subject to various forces, one force will push up, one will push down, and one will stay in the middle. I've got all the things for it, except the direction is different. Entropy is the force that tries to negate everything and that will try to dis-assemble something that is whole and nullified or make it all completely equal. Um, you could call it the force of destruction, the destructive force, the corruptive force, and the force of positive, which is the diametrical, of the opposed force operating in the opposite direction. Now, we as people are made up of these 2 forces, and we are constantly being held in balance between these 2 forces. Never are we completely good, ever nor are we ever completely bad, we're kind of usually in-between, hopefully leaning way more towards the positive. As like a precarious kind of balancing act. But the force of entropy, or call it the dark force, or the negative force, can be very strong at times. And it manifests itself more strongly in certain individuals than in others, because they may be less evolved or they have their own will. Maybe they want to be more ... maybe they want this force more, from the past manifested in themselves. Now, mankind can only be as strong and as pure as their weakest link. As long as we have in our midst, people who are not evolved, and who are so primitive in their thinking... And I mean primitive in the sense of thinking in terms of evil, as long as this is the case, we will all have to suffer from this, because we all are one, we are all one race. We are all brothers and sisters. And, if our weakest brothers and sisters don't see the light, they will pull us all down, unless we do something against them. We have, if we consider ourselves to be the older, the older brothers and sisters or, shall we call it, enlightened ones, we have an obligation to, or as the healthy ones, we have the obligation to look after the ones that are maybe, less healthy, and try to help and make them more whole. I think we are all in the same boat, or in a similar boat, and the fate of mankind with our own control, largely and Jesus gave us the key to this, shall we say, celebration. But, we have to utilize the key, and actually activate the key; and this is what all the stories of the *Sky of Avalon: The Symphonic Legend* is about. You know, the grail of conscience, and conscience that I was referring to, is nothing else but symbols for the divine part that's in every human soul, which I call the conscience, that is our most precious, most undiluted, our purest part. That is, if anything in us is divine, it's our conscience. And the grail of conscience, this is what I'm referring to – this is what has been lost over the ages and what we need to find again.

In *The Sky of Avalon*... if I understand you correctly, you're talking about this grail of consciousness, or rather conscience, isn't it clear that Christianity teaches that mankind is deprived er depraved, and that his potential is nothing but sinful . . . wouldn't that contradict, um, this philosophy?
Well, it would, but I don't agree with your premise. Maybe certain Christian philosophers or interpreters have interpreted the words in this way. I certainly wouldn't. You know, sometimes Jesus, when He got exasperated, because he also had a temper and sometimes He found it too hard to deal with the stupidity of the people around Him,

because that's the only way you can call it. Our display of, or lack of, conscience sometimes, and so He would call them, "Oh ye," you know, "perverse, faceless generation. How often do I have to tell you?" But – if I may be so bold as to speak for Him – I think He did not, for one moment, believe that the people were so sinful that they were beyond redemption. On the contrary, I think He strongly believed in the ability of the human soul as a whole to rise up above and rise to a higher level. This is why He was talking of the kingdom heaven and He said, "My Father's house, mansion, has many rooms." And you will only get there if you follow a certain part. And everybody has the chance. Many are called, but few are chosen. Yes, this is true. It's a certain weeding out process, but the possibility is there. Absolutely. Otherwise, I wouldn't believe that. Then I couldn't see a purpose in the whole thing at all. So, this is my interpretation.

Yeah, I, uh, respect your interpretation. I find it hard to agree, and to dismiss what scholars, I guess Orthodox scholars over the years when you look at the total of all of Scripture, both the Old and New Testament Canons. It seems to weave just a common story.
I disagree. If you look at scholars, from Thomas of Acquine, or if you're looking at St. Augustine or all of them, they will agree about certain things. I would say they also disagree about a lot of things. You know, we, in this century, tend to agree on certain things. But I bet you, in the next century, they'll agree on different things. There have been so many different interpretations of Christian Doctrine, and I certainly find interesting what other philosophers are saying, but I'm not daunted by the fact that maybe 10 guys out there hold a different opinion from my own. I know these scriptures. I know them very, very well. I've gone very deeply into them and I think I've found my own inspiration there, so this is what I believe in and ... um, but my mind is always open. If somebody comes up with a concept I haven't thought about ... great! You know, because I certainly can always learn to look at things in a different light. In fact, I should always have an open mind. That's very, very important. Because that's the way inspiration works. I keep my mind always open. But, at the same time, what I have found to be true, I tend to stand on my guns, you know? But I wouldn't go as far as to say, "Well, I'm right and you're wrong." Because there are many different ways of looking at the same image. You know, if somebody is holding a flower in front of you, I'm looking from the front and I'm describing the flower, you're looking from the back, you may be describing a completely different object, and we're both talking about the same thing. You know, so interpretations are ... I don't know whether they are so important, actually.

I think it's pretty telling that we have such an accurate Scripture in the Old Testament and New Testaments. We've got languages, like Hebrew and Greek... Like, the Greek that we have much of the New Testament written in is kind of like a dead language, so there's not ... it's not so open to interpretation, as other languages or other stories might be.
But there is still a lot of room for interpretation. If you look, for instance, at the Gospel -- and the New Testament, to me, is by far the most interesting part of the Bible -- if you compare Mark, Matthew, John, Luke. Uh, they are actually incongruencies, and some of them sometimes tend to contradict ... just about, maybe, minor details -- some slightly larger. And then you have to start thinking, and you have to start feeling things, and you have to make up your mind. Who is right, you know? What's right, what's wrong? I guess this is only human, because let's not forget that the Bible, even though inspired by God or the Word of God, it is largely not the direct word of God as we hear it spoken, like Moses, you know, in that sense? But, it is still a translation of a translation of words that somebody else heard. And, which I think, further down, over the ages and over the ages... So, my personal way of looking at these things is I read as closely as I can what's written, but, at the same time, I am perfectly aware of various other possibilities, I've got enough different translations, because, being German, I know the dialect German, and English, French to a degree, Italian to a degree, even Latin to a degree. You would be amazed how differently these things sometimes are translated -- and even in the same language. Look at how many different English Bibles there are. And these things make you think. When thinking about all this, one should certainly have a good look at all that, and understand how much room there sometimes is for interpretation. You know?

I think it is a marvelous thing that, for instance, the resurrection of Christ, where Jesus ascends before His followers, it was like the Word, (but) God did not just leave us with just one eyewitness, but He says that there was 5,000 people who saw Him. And when the book of Acts was written, many scholars think it was before 100 AD, and many of those 5,000 witnesses were walking around and could verify this report. And I think it is marvelous that we have something like that. If I could be so personal, one thing that I find wonderful about the Scriptures, that fascinates me is, uh, a lot of the Old Testament – when I find pictures of the New Testament in the Old Testament. One example would be Adam, which is often called... Jesus is often referred to as the Second Adam, or the last Adam. When Eve took a bite of the fruit that was forbidden, Adam found out about it and supposedly he knew, you know, that by eating that, the penalty was death, and he could have not taken that. He wasn't tempted by the devil, like Eve was. Eve was holding it out to him. So, he knowingly took a bite of the apple, knowing that his ... the woman that he was one with, that he would sacrifice himself, essentially, and take the penalty that she had taken upon herself, by biting in knowingly, which is like a picture of Christ. And then you have Abraham with Isaac.
You know the translation of Adam? You know what Adam actually physically means? What the word means?

Uh, I forgot.
It means "man." You know what Eve means?

I can't remember. I think I heard this once...
It means "life." Man needs life, you know? There is a lot of meaning in ... these names don't come just out of nowhere, there is meaning behind all of these biblical names. And it's sometimes good to reflect upon it. Whether that reflects life in there, you know? Physical life. Wherever you look at in the Bible – not only with Jesus, but also in the Old Testament – everything can be read at a physical, material way, but there's always a symbolic meaning to everything that's in there. And and sometimes (it's) very rewarding to think about that.

Yeah, that's one of the most fascinating things about the Bible, to me. Like the Passover – all the symbols of Christ in there; Abraham and Isaac; uh, the tabernacle of David representing the church. It's so rich. It's an endless amount of fascination for me. I have a question. How would you define the son of God, and is anyone else in history or alive today what you would call a Son of God? (Doorbell in background sounds)
What's that sound?

That's the doorbell. It means the magic question has been asked and, if you get this right, you get a million dollars. (both laugh)
Um, Jesus said, uh, we're all children of God, we're all Sons of God. But I believe, of course, that Jesus was the one Son of God, and, in a wider sense, we're all sons and daughters of God, you know? That's my view on it. I think we're the little brothers and sisters of Jesus. But we're by far not on His level, thank you very much (both laugh). If we were, this world would be vastly different.

I agree. I think it's in Hebrews 8, where it talks about . . . uh, it says, "It is appointed unto man to die once and then comes judgement." How do you see that Scripture in light...
What book?

Yeah, the book of Hebrews. How do you view that Scripture in light of your belief in reincarnation?
Uh, say it again...

"It is appointed unto man to die once, and then comes judgement." I think it's in the 8th chapter of Hebrews, if my memory serves me correct. *(It's actually 9:27)*
Um, well, at first hearing, it doesn't sound as if it

continued on page 17

CHRISTIAN RIVEL INTERVIEW

...THE MAN BEHIND NARNIA, DIVINEFIRE, AND RIVEL RECORDS

What have you been up to lately with Rivel Records? Please describe your new releases.
I have been working hard with new productions and releases during 2004. Finally I have finished & released my solo album in Japan under the name Audiovision. The title of the album is *The Calling*. I have a lots of great players involved from bands like Kiss, Europe, Whitesnake, Blue Murder, Therion, Freak Kitchen, and many more guests are involved. I have worked on this album the last 18 months.

I have also released my new band, called Divinefire, which I formed last Spring together with Jani Stefanovic (Renascent, Crimson Moonlight, ex-Sins of Omission, ex-Am I Blood) and Andreas Olsson (Narnia, Harmony, Stormwind). The style is a perfect mix between the extreme metal meets symphonic & neo-classic metal. We also have great guests on the debut album, *Glory Thy Name*, like: Eric Clayton (Saviour Machine), Hubertus Liljegren (Crimson Moonlight), Carl Johan Grimmark (Narnia, Rob Rock, Saviour Machine), Torbjorn Weinesjo & Fredrik Sjoholm (Venie Domine). Both Audiovision and Divinefire are now available in the US & all over the world.

I am also involved in a cool symphonic rock band (in the vein of Kansas, Styx, and Queen), called Flagship; where we have a great guest involved on the album – Kerry Livgren (Kansas). The album will be finished this Spring and hopefully will see the light of Autumn 2005. The album features members from Narnia, Brigheye Brison, and Modest Attraction.

I have also released 6 releases besides my own on the label: *The Sweet According to Sweden*; Veni Domine – *IIII : The Album of Labour*, Parakletos – *Offerlammets Makt.* Heartcry's *Lightmaker i*s great classic metal. You will find members from Flagship and Jerusalem in the line-up; and musical elements from Judas Priest, Rainbow, and Scorpions with a straight forward message about Jesus Christ! Mirador is the epic metal sensation from Sweden. Their debut album, *The Azrael Tales,* is filled with wonderful moments and it is a metal treasure. Crimson Moonlight's *Veil of Remembrance* is the follow-up to 2003´s big success, *The Covenant Progress*. This is an extreme metal masterpiece, and fans all over the world rank this album as one of the finest moments in extreme metal history.

Besides all things above I have been doing alot of shows with Narnia during 2004 in different places of the world – among them the Revolution Metal Fest in Mexico, with Saviour Machine, Exousia, and Mortification. It was wonderful experience. So, 2004 has been the most hectic year in my whole life. And, finally... now I am in the pre-production for the next Narnia and second Divinefire albums, which will be out late 2005.

What led to the formation of Divinefire? What sort of plans/ideas went into the creation of the band's songs?
The formation started February 26, 2004, when I got a call from Jani Stefanovic, when he asked about the possibilities to release Renascent through Rivel Records. During the phonecall a voice inside spoke to me very clear to me that, 'You should co-operate with this man and help in his call to be a musician for God.' I told him my ideas and vision to combine the extreme metal with symphonic & neo-classic metal and he has had ideas in his mind, too, so we started from there and the rest is history. The response to *Glory Thy Name* has been great so far. We have created a new style in metal and we believe that this band has a strong future and we are looking forward for many years and many albums and tours.

I decided to turn the offer down for Renascent, but through all our connections through Divinefire, Renascent have signed a deal with the same label in Japan as Divinefire and Audiovision – King Records Japan.

The journey with Divinefire has been one of the most exciting things in life and the band has a big priority, together with NARNIA.

What excites you the most about the music you see and hear around you? What excites you about these band(s)? Why?
I am always interested to hear and see music that touches my heart in different ways. For me it has been very important to do all these different albums in different styles, because I want to express my voice in different ways and I am deeply thankful to God for my talent.

Two vocalists that really touch my heart in a special way are Rob Rock and Jorn Lande (Masterplan). I listen alot to Rob´s work in Impellitteri and Rob Rock Creation, and the two Masterplan albums. The way they express their voices is incredible and their lyrics really touch my heart. For me it was a great time to finally meet and to know Mr. Rob Rock when we played together with him in Norway with Narnia; and now three of the members of Narnia are involved in his band.

The new Crimson Moonlight album is one of the coolest thing in energy metal. I love the speed and the fire in their music and this inspires me alot in life. The new Neal Morse album, called *One*, is another album that gives me goosebumps. So you see, I am open to different ways to express your feelings through music.

You are very involved with a real metal label. You actually sing and incorporate melody in the music that you create... How much do you understand, appreciate, and like the harsher kinds of metal – thrash/death/black, etc?
I know the scene pretty well and sometimes I listen to this kind of music, like Megadeth, Soilwork, and In Flames. I have close contact with the guys in Crimson Moonlight and Jani Stefanovic in Divinefire, so I am always updated on what is happening in the scene, plus I receieve a lot of metal magazines all over the world. You have to know and look for information when you run a metal label like Rivel Records.

What sort of messages has God put on your heart lately?
The message for me is simple to all people, and it is too see your brother, sister and friends you have around you. We live in an egocentric world; and my prayer is to let God´s love inspire us to do good things and to make the world shine a little bit more. God has put on my heart the last two years to be very close to Him in prayer and to take the time read the Bible and show the power and inspiration of the Word of God through my albums and you can see this in my new albums, Divinefire, Narnia, Flagship, and Audiovision. I am very happy for the vision God is giving me for my lyrics and song melodies. God has also connected me with great people, who live close to God and are a good team behind me all the time in prayers.

...it would take into consideration, um, the topic of reincarnation. It sounds like it, like we're talking about one life only. But, to me, it's not that important, because of how many parts in the Bible that wouldn't actually subscribe to in the same way. I mean, although I consider it a Holy book, I've already said, it is also man-made and even prophets, I think, sometimes make mistakes; and they were the first to actually admit it, and they struggle with God and they got punished for it. In fact, even Moses, probably the greatest of the prophets, had to undergo ... he was punished by God, because he resisted God, and he wasn't allowed to see the Promised Land at the end. I'm not saying that he said anything wrong, but I wouldn't rule out that whatever is written in the Bible ... I mean, basically what I'm saying is, that my take on it is, that not everything I read is what I would subscribe to. And that includes even the Old Testament. However, there's virtually nothing of the teachings of Jesus that I have seen that I wouldn't subscribe to. Because I've looked at them and I've read them over and over and I think I found absolutely nothing in there, including the Sabbath, you know, when the scholars were constantly reminding everybody of the Old Testament and, and they tried to live by that and Jesus said, "No, I came to ... the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath." and He actually changed it in front of their eyes, you know? Or when the woman was about to be stoned, He rewrote it. He wrote it with his hand in the sand. And then He tells them, basically, "Don't stone her." and He didn't tell them, but He made them, He didn't give them a chance to even stone her. So He kind of, He revoked what was written there in the Old Testament, because the Old Testament is an eye for an eye; tooth for a tooth. And He said, you know, "No, not even give him one cheek, give him the other, too." You understand?

Yeah.

So He Himself, although He came to fulfill the Old Testament, He also, in certain respects, contradicted it or bettered it, or whatever. So, I think what He's saying in the Gospel several times is, for me, ample proof that He believed in the theory of reincarnation – not a theory – the doctrine of reincarnation. And, if it's written otherwise, earlier on this may have been somebody else's belief, I don't know. It's certainly not mine.

privilege and a great responsibility," says Karim, guitarist for the band. "It was an unforgettable event which caused us to face our work with much more seriousness. It's not everyday that we have the opportunity to play before seven thousand people like at the Helloween show." He also tackles the quality issue by blaming it mostly on the lack of professional studios and qualified sound people. "There are only a handful of true professionals who understand this type of sound, and consequently most bands wind up producing their albums themselves, which was the case with our first CD, *The Second Floor*. The final version was far below what we were shooting for in terms of quality, but it was a great learning experience. Our next album coming out in April, entitled *Faceless Man*, is better produced and recorded and will surely surprise a lot of people," he comments.

Where does he see the scene going in the next ten years? Karim gives us his prediction. "I believe the scene is heading in the right direction. I like to say that the Brazilian scene is similar to the European scene of ten years ago. A lot of the good bands are coming out and getting better at what they do, more people are willing to invest their money, more promoters are willing to take bands under their wings, and the larger labels are opening their eyes to the Brazilian scene. I think in the next several years we will have bands other than Angra, Krisiun, and Sepultura gaining more prominence in the media and they will usher an invasion of the worldwide market! The path we walk today was the path pioneered by bands such as Stratovarius and Helloween ten or fifteen years ago."

While the scene awaits the call from the major labels, small labels and distros have filled in the gap. Of those, perhaps the most prominent one is Extreme Records. Based in Uberlândia, Extreme Records is the brainchild of Cássio and Marcelo, the publishers of the country's premiere Christian extreme metal magazine, *Extreme Brutal Death*. With a roster that focuses primarily on extreme acts, Extreme Records has achieved success by keeping things basic: domestic bands are signed to small contracts, and international acts receive distribution in the country via licensing deals. Some of the bands signed to Extreme Records include **Necromanicider**, **Zurisadai**, **Moriah**, and Divine Symphony. *Extreme Brutal Death*, the magazine, is on its fourteenth edition, and for the last several ones offers a CD sampler with bands from the label's roster, as well as smaller, more unknown bands. Although it is mainly published in Portuguese, they have recently released a version in English. Another great media outlet and publicity outpost is *Metal Mission*, the magazine and distro headed by the legendary Flávio the Souza. While the paper edition of the magazine ceased to exist in 2001, the website marches on, with interviews, a news section which is surprisingly up-to-date, and a webstore that offers CDs, t-shirts, and magazines.

In all, it is safe to predict that the future holds new and exciting prospects for the Brazilian Christian metal scene, with more professional releases and further exposure internationally, and the usual deluge of new bands. Yet, we can count on one thing to remain the same: the same dedication to the Kingdom that was clearly and prominently displayed by the precursors of the scene will continue for years to come. The lost will continue to be reached to, and new souls will continue being liberated by the authority of God through this powerful vehicle that is Christian metal. That is, in the end, the scene's ultimate call and reason for being.

On the web:
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ALBUM REVIEWS

EXTOL

THE BLUEPRINT DIVES

I've been a huge Extol fan from the beginning. *Burial* and *Undeceived* are two of my all-time favorite albums. I also liked *Synergy,* despite the significant change in musical style. But after hearing that two key members had left the band (Christer Espevoll and Ole Borud) and that Extol was again changing their sound, I was skeptical of the new album.

With *Blueprint* Extol has definitely changed, and not necessarily for the better. *Blueprint* is best described as a combination of *Synergy* and emo-metal similar to The Deftones. One of the main changes on *Blueprint* is that there are a lot of clean vocals. Whereas on previous albums these were a nice break from the death growls (none of which are found here) and thrash screams, I've never thought that clean vocals were Extol's strength. I still don't.

Still, this is unmistakably Extol. The music is technical; it's just not as heavy as past efforts. Once the shock wore off from the first time I heard it, I realized *Blueprint* does have some good songs. I like it better with every listen. Also, the lyrics are well written as always.

Instead of continuing to excel in their former metal genre, with *Blueprint*, Extol has fallen closer to the pack of mediocrity that largely exists in today's metal scene. If you're primarily a death metal fan, you probably won't like this album. If you're a fan of Extol, which most of us are, buy *Blueprint* and see what it has to offer.
[Century Media] Chris Beck

DISCIPLE

RISE UP

First Disciple disc I've heard since *This Might Sting a Little*. Still sounds like Disciple, but this is less aggressive and more commercial. They still fall into that hard rock/semi-metal category, but the music is more catchy, melodic, and radio-friendly. Where the old stuff was almost angry and forceful, this is easier to digest. The band will still occasionally knock you against the wall with powerful guitars and harsh screams, but they also don't hesitate to show their softer side. For example, compare "Only You" and the title track, in which the first could land on your local contemporary Christian radio station while the latter, with its Zao-like guitar tone mixed with a brutal crunch, will give your grandpa a heart attack. Good quality material here that may alienate some picky Disciple fans, but will definitely appeal to a wider audience. [S/R/E] Matt Morrow

ANTESTOR

THE FORSAKEN

Finally, seven long years after their album *The Return of the Black Death*, Antestor has released a new full-length album. Last year's *Det Tapte Liv* EP was a nice treat, but was too short. Not so with *The Forsaken*, which has 11 tracks (there is a hidden track) and is 45 minutes long.

The band has changed since *ROTBD*. Vocals are performed by Vrede (former singer of Vaakevandring), while Hellhammer (Mayhem, Immortal) lends his legendary drumming skills. Each performs very well and adds his own touch to the distinct sound of Antestor.

The Forsaken opens with a haunting female vocal melody that sounds like it's from *The Lord of the Rings* movie soundtrack. From there, it's song after song of blistering yet melodic black metal. "Old Times Cruelty," which first appeared on the limited *Come Armageddon* album, is one of the best black metal songs ever. As exemplified by this song, Antestor has perfected the ability of mixing shrieking vocals and blast drumbeats with beautiful underlying melodies that you will never get out of your head. Other strong tracks include "Rites of Death" and "The Crown I Carry."

Lyrically, this is not a "feel good" album. Subjects include suicide and the eternal impact sin can have on our lives. The lyrics aren't quite as bold as Antestor's past efforts. Ultimately, every song points to God, but it's a dark road the listener travels while getting there.

The captivating cover artwork and the typical high quality digipak from Endtime complete the package. Although *The Forsaken* probably won't be considered a classic like *ROTBD*, this is still a great album that all metal fans should get. [Endtime] Chris Beck

WINTER SOLSTICE

THE FALL OF ROME

Track one hooked me; sadly the hooks are not as frequent as I would like. Lots of Melodic death influences intertwined within mid-paced metalcore. If this band could get rid of the "current" core sound and expand on the hints of genius that they clearly have then they would rule. [Metal Blade] Mike Larson

ABSURD2

EP

Two of the three songs on this EP have appeared on other albums, but now we have them together in this digipak with nice, albeit dull, packaging. The band contains one current member and one former member of Extol, so it's no surprise the music sounds like the modern thrash we heard from Ganglion and Extol on *Synergy*. [Endtime] Chris Beck

ROYAL ANGUISH

TALES OF SULLEN EYES

Memorable melodies, top-notch musicianship, and the production wizardry of Eric Rutan (Morbid Angel/Hate Eternal) make this gothic-laced black/death metal behemoth one of the best extreme metal releases of recent memory, in any genre. "Twisted Angel" is destined to be a classic. Record labels, wake up.
[Indie] Ed Hellig

ANTIDEMON

DEMONICIDIO

I would say that the majority of the music on this disc reminds me of old S.O.D. mosh riffing. That early "crossover" sound of thrash meets punk. A

Surf this: extolweb.com, disciplerocks.com, antestor.com, wintersolstice.net, endtimeproductions.com, royalanguish.com, antidemon.com.br

couple times, they set aside the extreme "C is for cookie" style vocals and just bark it out gutter punk. It is a simple, heavy and enjoyable album. My main complaint here is the drum sound; whenever the blastbeats kick in, the drums drop down considerably in the mix. And the snare sound, I hate it.
[Indie] Mike Larson

AUDIOVISION
S/T
In a kickback to the glory days of 80's metal, Audivision plays anthemic metal that is in your face both stylistically and lyrically. This has some modern tinges, and is an update of what all classical metalheads love. [Rivel] Daniel Jesse

VARIOUS ARTISTS
UNDERGROUND ROT 2
Production quality ranges from lo-fi to fairly decent, and the master volume tends to be uneven as some tracks end up much louder than others. The track listing covers a range of black metal, thrash, and death, giving a good idea of what is happening in the underground.
[Rotting] J.R. Morden

SHADOWS OF PARAGON
S/T
Decent, consistent, intricate death/black metal with vocals reminiscent of *Divine Wintertime*-era Immortal Souls, with added versatility (see the last track, "Psalm"). It is uneven in parts, particularly the female vocals. They kick in so sporadically, they feel out of place. Overall, a strong debut. [Indie] Ed Hellig

MIRADOR
THE AZRAEL TALES
Talk about a solid first release. One of the great things about Mirador is the willingness to experiment, while maintaining their sound. This album has good production, and good songwriting. I am looking forward to hearing them mature over the years. For fans of Queensryche and Balance of Power. [Rivel] Mike Larson

GRANDLUX
IRON WILL
This power metal band started in 1999. Lead vocalist Phil Goode lays a Christian Rivel-type delivery over a solid rhythm section. The lead guitar playing by B.D. Hughes and Kirk Evin are splendid and smartly placed. While no doubt a good live band to see, this album only shows off an average, yet solid band. [Sand] DV

DYNASTY
MOTUS PERPETUUS
Keyboards kick of this blistering prog-metal attack a la Dream Theater, with some fast and well-mixed double bass drumming. The vocals of Nahor Andrade are solid, tough, and consistent. While not pretty, his style does not detract from some good metal. [Advantage] DV

STILL REMAINS
OF LOVE AND LUNACY
When you look at these band members individually, you might get a confused impression. Vocalist TJ Miller has kinda short, moppy hair and wears a black fingerless glove. You immediately think "power metal wannabe." One of their guitarists, Jordan Whelan, has a long face and a skinny tall frame that's decorated only in black (lipstick, eyeliner, pants, shirt). You think: "Type O Negative. This guy could handle Peter Steele in a fight (maybe)." You've got a keyboardist (Zach Roth) and another guitarist (Mike Church) that both look like they could be adding BGVs to any emo/screamo band out there. The drummer AJ Barrette's in the back behind a bunch of cymbals and whatnot, so he doesn't surprise anyone, although he's small and un-intimidating (emo). What you get sonically, however, is very much different, and yet exactly what you'd expect. The wall of sound they unleash is powerful and loud. Their keyboards and well-sung BGVs add layers of atmosphere; while Miller powers his way through the songs with shout/screams and tough guy intensity. Yes, Still Remains should make its metal-heavy label quite proud. "White Walls" will be one of those singles, no doubt, that gets added to a Headbanger's Ball commercial, and lots of girls will come to their shows, only to be pummelled with a killer metal attack. The mix is perfect. I love this album. [Roadrunner] DV

NORMA JEAN
O' GOD, THE AFTERMATH
At NJ's recent show with Atreyu I found myself in the pit and one of those kung-fu hardcore dancing kids nails me in the nose full-on high-speed with his knuckles. I don't even think, I take him down and three others with me. Coming out on top, I press my knees on this punk's chest and get ready to exact revenge. But I'm pulled off by two quick-acting guys who calm me down on the way to the rear of the club. Between their "Chill out, bro's" and choke holds, I look into their eyes and see God's love. We hug. This is today's Christian metal. [Solid State] Kern County Kid, The

DIVINE SYMPHONY
REJECT DARKNESS
The unyielding, bombastic obra prima of newcomers Divine Symphony will leave you broken, mauled, and clamoring for more! Symphonic, melodic black metal in the vain of Dimmu Borgir and Vaakevandring. Brutal, chaotic at times, it grabs you by the throat and never lets you go. [Extreme] Ed Hellig

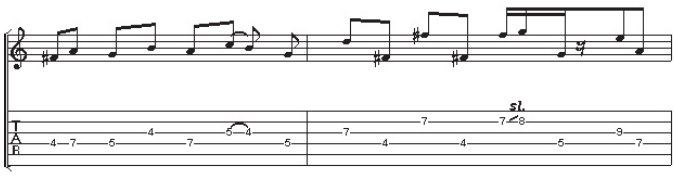
Surf this: rivelrecords.com, rottingrecords.tk, shadowsofparagon.com, mirador.info.se, grandlux.net, advantagerecords.com, stillremains.com, normajeannoise.com, divinesymphony.triang.net

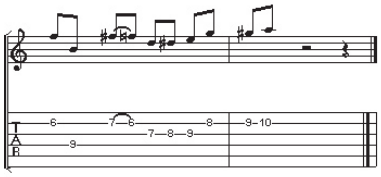
LICKS & TRICKS

By Jeff Scheetz

Chromatic licks

Here is a cool lick that uses some chromatic passages. The Chromatic scale is made up of all 12 notes – so in other words you are playing every note on your guitar. The most common use of the Chromatic scale is when it is used as "passing notes" in a phrase. In other words, when you take a lick that uses the notes from a common scale, and add a couple of notes that are not in the scale. These "passing tones," can be thought of as notes from the Chromatic scale. (Sometimes they sound like "wrong" notes, especially to beginners whose ear hasn't developed to the point of hearing those outside notes). A common way to add what would be called a Chromatic lick, is to play a scale, and then on one string, just play your fingers in consecutive order – 1, 2, 3, 4, instead of following the scale pattern. There are many more aspects to Chromatic theory, such as Chromatic chords, Chromatic harmony etc. But for now, let's start with a simple lick that starts in key, but then moves us into Chromatic territory. This lick is from the G Major scale. It starts out by moving up the scale, and then does some string skipping. But all of the first line stays in key. When we get to the second line we see notes added that are not in the key of G. Once again some of these notes may sound "out of key" to you, but as you get it down it will become a smooth transition. Keep at it until you get it smooth.





[Coming soon: the re-release of Jeff's first two CD's Warp Speed and Woodpecker Stomp! Go to the web for details. www.jeffscheetz.com]

DRUM & DRUMMER

By John Simmons

Foundations of Effective Practicing

Having established an understanding of what we as Christians are doing when we undertake our pursuit of drumming, we now turn to how we go about the task. The following are some of the principles which will guide our study:

1. Practicing is to be our primary day-to-day concern. Performances rest on, or depend upon, the knowledge and skills that a drummer has developed in his practicing. The quality of a performance is established by the work done prior to it. Therefore, the major thrust of our work as drummers is in preparation for our performances.

2. Practicing is to be self-consciously oriented toward equipping ourselves to perform better. This seems obvious, but the majority of "practicing" I hear around my rehearsal space isn't really practicing; it's playing. True practice is deliberately repeating things one cannot play (or play well). In other words, if you are playing something you can already do at a performance level, you're not practicing.

3. Though practice requires a great deal of repetition, it does not have to be a drag. When we are easily bored, the problem does not lie in the material, it lies in our attitude. If playing the drums is what we love, then doing it for an hour or two ought not be boring. It becomes boring because often we do not seek enjoyment from playing the drums so much as we're looking to be entertained. We are to remember what we are doing and what it is for.

4. If you cannot play something without making mistakes, you are playing it too fast. This is the primary source of frustration for any student I have ever taught (and for me as well!). We keep trying to play something at a tempo that we can't handle, until we get fed up and quit. A better alternative is to play so slowly that you can't make a mistake. It doesn't matter how slow that is. Try it one note at a time until you can handle it.

5. Practicing something begins with understanding it. We often try to play something without taking the minute or two that it takes to simply look through it or count it down. Begin an exercise by "shaking hands" with the new concept, movement or pattern and have a clear idea in your mind of what you are learning. This will make your repetition of the exercise much more effective.

Take some time to evaluate your practice habits in light of these principles. Where are you lacking? Where are you getting it? What are your results? Are you satisfied with them? We'll continue with practicing next time.

[John Simmons is the drummer for Atomic Opera (among other things) and a drum teacher in Houston, Texas. His website is www.johnnydrums.com. Please visit and send him an email. He lives for that.]

THROWING DOWN THE GAUNTLET

By Steve Rowe

When Is It Time To Let Go?

Some of you may know that I have taken up athletics again. A sport I loved when I was younger. I throw Javelin, Discuss & Shot Putt from a frame in a Disability class. I am Motor Paralysed following cancer. I threw all 3 at this year's Australian Track & Field Championships. My favorite of the 3 throws is Discuss. It is the most scientific of the 3 throws.

The Discuss needs to be let go at a precise point or I either slice or hook into the outfield. If I hold on too long, it flies low, flat, left, & ugly. If I let go too early, it flies high, right, ugly, & into right field. Both resulting in no throws.

So how does this relate to Christianity? Well, if we compare these ideas with God's will for our lives, we can see a picture. If we let go of God's plan for our lives too early, we may end up in right field on the wide road to destruction, away from His will. Even worse, if we hold on to something too long, we are bound to end up in left field on the wide road to destruction.

Maybe right now it is time to let go of that sin that is holding you back in your walk with God. Don't miss what God has in His plan for you by letting go or holding on too long. It is important that we throw ourselves into God's work with all our might, finding the staightest path down the narrow road He would have us walk with Him.

SOUND ADVICE

By Pastor Bob

Waiting to Exhale

"It's a boy!" the doctor exclaimed as he held the baby upside down. Then, with a little slap on the baby's behind, the doctor smiled as the little boy began to cry. "The process is not successful until we know the baby is breathing," he explains. That's the way all of us enter the world. From our first breath at birth to our last breath when we leave this world, we will go through many "breathing" experiences.

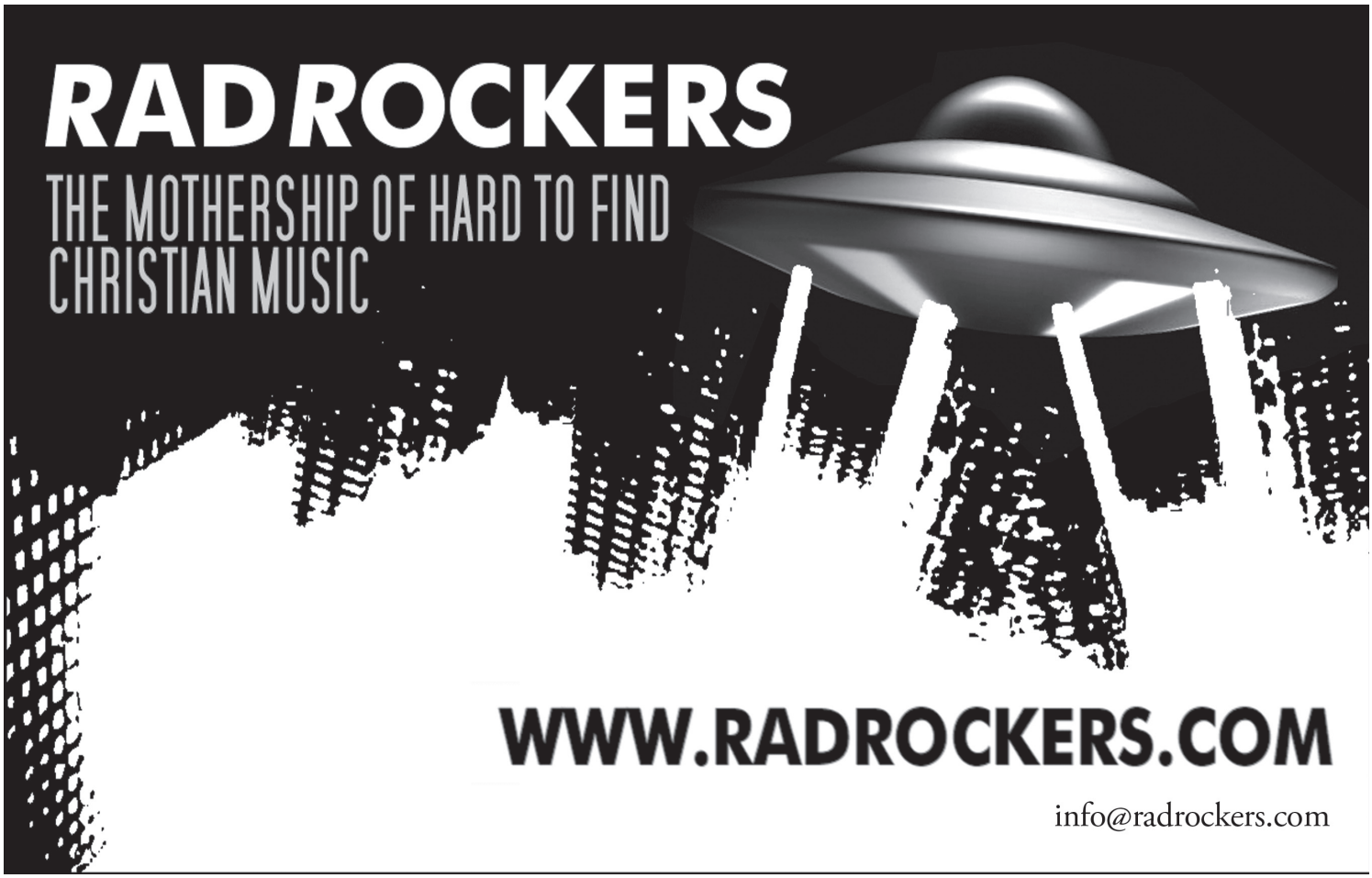
There are times when we run out of breath. I recently had the privilege of speaking at a concert where Disciple was playing (great band, by the way). I was very impressed with their ministry, and also with the singer's ability to hold a note. There were a few times when his face turned red, and I wondered where all the air was coming from! At one point between songs, he told the crowd to hold on a moment while he caught his breath. There are times when we "forget" to breathe, like during a scary movie or on a fast roller coaster ride. The situation is so intense that we hold our breath to prepare for the worst! Then, when it is all over, we finally exhale.

Jesus' death on the cross must have been one of those very intense times. The excruciating pain, together with the constriction of his lungs, must have made breathing very difficult. Jesus said, "Father forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." As Jesus hung there, He took the sin of the whole world upon Himself. About six hours later, Jesus announced that it was finished. Then, with all the strength He could pull together, He called out with a loud voice, "Father, into Your hands I commit My Spirit." When He had said this, He breathed His last. When Jesus rose again three days later... He walked in victory. His work was complete. Salvation was purchased with His great sacrifice. I'm sure He felt great relief. IT WAS FINISHED! He accomplished what He came here to do!

Now, here's the Good News. We walk in the same kind of victory today. For those of us who have been saved by the blood of Jesus on the cross that day, everything that we encounter in this world has ALREADY been taken care of. God's preparations for the "catastrophes" of life were complete when Jesus breathed His last breath. Jesus died for our difficult times of breathing. His word for you today is "EXHALE - IT IS FINISHED!" There is nothing that you can encounter that is out of the hands of God. He is faithful to orchestrate every detail of your life for your good. He prepared the way so that you don't have to hold your breath. "It is finished." You can exhale.

Walking in victory is difficult. We have gotten the idea that if we worry and fret enough, that it will somehow earn a relief for us. The truth of the matter is that worry is a lack of trust. If we fully understood the great victory that Jesus won on the cross when He said, "It is finished," we would exhale in victory instead of holding our breath in fear. We would walk in security instead of uncertainty.

How are you breathing today? Are you still waiting to exhale? Are the situations in your life overwhelming? Are you afraid of what tomorrow might bring? Remember, Jesus paid the price. It is finished. He gave you victory. He bought your freedom. He planned for today. He is in control. Don't wait. EXHALE!



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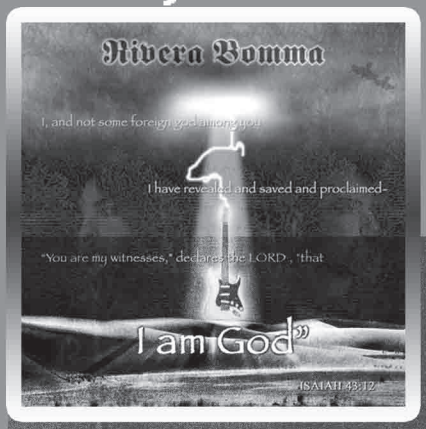

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THE REAL WORLD

"The wicked are like the tossing sea, for it cannot rest, and its waters toss up refuse and mud."

There is a lost world. Filled with people who can never rest from within.
Whose lives produce hurt and nothing of value to themselves.
We must find them, it is our responsibility as that light.